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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001700

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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ'S BAND OF BROTHERS

REF: A. CARACAS 1635
[1](#)B. CARACAS 1693

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Classified By: Daniel Lawton, Deputy Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(d)

[1](#)1. (C) Six of the seventeen PSUV governors elected to office on November 23 were either co-conspirators in Chavez's 1992 coup attempt or his military contemporaries. Personal loyalty, reliability and the ethos of a military fraternity reflected in many of Chavez's ministerial appointments and were replicated at the gubernatorial level. This is the third cable in a series examining the background of the governors elected in the November 23 state and local elections.

GOVERNOR OF APURE - JESUS AGUILARTE GAMEZ

[1](#)2. (SBU) Jesus Alberto Aguilarte Gamez was born September 30, 1958 in Caracas. Aguilarte graduated from the Venezuelan Military Academy (VMA), 2nd lieutenant (LT) equivalent, as a combat engineer. A member of Chavez's Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement (MBR-200) as a cadet, Aguilarte helped occupy Fuerte Tiuna, Venezuela's Pentagon, during the 1992 coup attempt. Following a two-year prison sentence, Aguilarte remained heavily involved in Chavez's Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) as a planner and ideologue. Elected as a National Assembly Deputy from Apure in 1998, he also served as the state's governor from 1999 - 2000. Aguilarte was the DCM at Venezuela's mission in Ecuador in 2000. He was elected to his second consecutive term as governor of Apure with 56.6 percent of the vote. He is married.

GOVERNOR OF ARAGUA - RAFAEL ISEA ROMERO

[1](#)3. (SBU) Rafael Eduardo Isea Romero was born February 18, 1968 in Maracay. Isea graduated from the VMA, 2nd LT equivalent, as an armored officer. A founding member of Chavez's MBR-200 movement, Isea participated in the unsuccessful 1992 coup attempt. Following Chavez's release from prison, Isea served as his personal assistant until [1](#)1998. Isea was assigned in 1999 as a minister's assistant in the Ministry of Planning and Development. In 2000 he returned as Chavez's executive assistant and an analyst in the Miraflores situation room. From 2001 - 2004, Isea served in Washington D.C. as a counselor in Venezuela's mission to the Inter-American Development Bank. He was elected in 2005 as a National Assembly Deputy from Aragua and subsequently appointed Vice Minister of Finance in 2007 then Finance Minister in 2008. He was elected to his first term as governor of Aragua with 58.7 percent of the vote.

GOVERNOR OF BOLIVAR - FRANCISCO RANGEL GOMEZ

14. (SBU) Francisco Rangel Gomez was born April 4, 1953 in Caracas. Rangel graduated from the VMA, 2nd LT equivalent, as an artillery officer. Rangel and Chavez met while both were students at the VMA in 1971. Rangel interrupted his artillery career to study for a post-graduate degree and in 1986 received an M.S. in systems design and analysis. He was named chief of the technology department in the Defense Ministry's Information directorate. While development head of an electronic warfare system called "Project Beta" in the 1990s, he spent two years in Israel. In 1998 he was promoted to brigadier general equivalent and served six months as chief of army finances and eight months as director of the VMA. He was chosen by Chavez in 1998 as Minister of the Presidential Secretariat where he served for 18 months. Chavez then tapped Rangel to head Corporacion Venezolana de Guyana, a government mining, forestry, manufacturing and housing conglomerate. In 2004, at the behest of Chavez, Rangel ran and was elected Governor of Bolivar. He is married. He was elected to his second term as governor of Bolivar with 47.03 percent of the vote.

GOVERNOR OF PORTUGUESA - WILMAR CASTRO SOTELDO

15. (SBU) Wilmar Castro Soteldo was born March 3, 1956 and was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Venezuelan Air Force. He was sentenced to 27 years and six months for his participation in the Chavez's 1992 coup attempt. A member of the National Assembly in 1999, he played a role in drafting Venezuela's 1999 constitution. In 2000, Castro was named president of Avensa Airlines, a government-owned carrier that ceased operations in 2002. From 2004-2005, he served as Minister of Production and Commerce, then as Minister of Tourism before becoming Governor of Portuguesa. He was elected to his first

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term as governor of Portuguesa with 57.8 percent of the vote.

GOVERNOR OF VARGAS - JORGE GARCIA CARNEIRO

15. (SBU) Jorge Luis Garcia Carneiro was born February 8, 1952. Carneiro graduated from the VMA, 2nd LT equivalent in 1975, the same year group as Hugo Chavez. He served as Minister of Defense for 18 months from January 2004 -July 2005. Afterwards General Garcia Carneiro resigned as Defense Minister to head the newly formed Ministry of Social Development and Popular Participation. He was elected to his first term as governor with 61.4 percent of the vote.

GOVERNOR OF YARACUY - JULIO LEON HEREDIA

16. (SBU) Julio Cesar Leon Heredia was born October 23, 1966 in Maracay. Leon graduated from the School of Military Aviation (estimated date 1987) as an air force 2nd LT equivalent, specializing in logistics. Leon helped occupy Maracay garrison during Chavez's 1992 coup attempt. After his incarceration, he studied electrical engineering in Maracay and then moved to Yaracuy where he became a farmer. During his years in Yaracuy he became a community organizer and campaigner for Chavez's MVR party. His success in Chavez's presidential campaign and the 1999 constitutional reform elevated him to the ranks of regional organizer. Leon reportedly brought in 10 billion Bolivars (USD equivalent 4.65 million) in funds for development projects. In 2004 Leon was elected as an alternate member of the state legislature, and failed in his 2005 run for the national assembly. He was elected to his first term as governor with 57.8 percent.

CAULFIELD